

Developing guidelines for a startup company's content marketing strategy

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<p>This is a project-based bachelor's thesis, that aims to identify what a company needs to consider when building a coherent and effective content marketing strategy. Based on the findings, content marketing guidelines have been developed for a Spanish startup Geowhim Technologies SL, dedicated to IT-services and applications. The company wants to improve its online presence by implementing content marketing strategy to its website with a goal of gaining recognisability in the market and users for its mobile application Geowhim. The objective of this thesis is to facilitate the company's content marketing strategy building with the developed guidelines.</p> <p>The structure of the thesis follows the zipper-method, where the theoretical and empirical parts are presented together. Each theory part is accompanied by recommendations for Geowhim Technologies' strategy building. The thesis objectives and limitations are presented in the beginning of the work together with a brief company introduction followed by the development of the guidelines in the main chapters. The discussion part summarizes the findings, gives future development proposals and a reflecting self-evaluation.</p> <p>The theory covered in this thesis combines the field professionals' instructions to effective content marketing strategy building. Bases on these instructions, six key points of an effective content marketing strategy has been recognised. These points are goal determination, understanding of the target audience, content type selection, content channel management, planning of the content publishing and performance measurement.</p> <p>Through this thesis it becomes clear that the content marketing strategy should be built around the goal and the target audience. Since content marketing in its simplicity is about creating and sharing online content, for it to function as an effective marketing method, it must have an intended goal and purpose with a focus in bringing value for the right people, for the right reasons. For this a content marketing strategy is needed as it leads the way and ensures the remaining on the road.</p> <p>The topic of this thesis is of current relevance because content marketing is recognized as an effective marketing method, and one that can generate important commercial impacts when planned and implemented carefully. Because the topic is viewed from a start-up company's point of view, the developed guidelines consider only the key points that a content marketing strategy should contain. These guidelines can be utilized as a base for similar content marketing kick-off cases as well as further developed.</p>	
Keywords Content marketing, content marketing strategy, content marketing strategy building, website marketing	

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1 Introduction

This chapter introduces background information about the topic, the objectives and the limitations of the work as well as an introduction to the commissioning party Geowhim technologies S.L. Also, the key concepts covered in this thesis are explained in order to facilitate the reading.

1.1 Background information

As said by Gary Vaynerchuk (2015), due to the internet era we are living through the biggest cultural shift of our time and yet it is still underrated by companies. For the consumers, the commercialized use of internet is only a 20-year phenomenon meaning that it is only starting and growing all the time. The companies must understand the importance of investing to this shift because without realizing the lifetime value of it, they are only playing last for so long. What is meant by this, is that the companies which are not focusing on the digitalization of their marketing efforts are not keeping up with the shift and it might result in marketing ineffectiveness in the future.

Nowadays most of the consumers' information search is done online using search engines, such as Google, because it is fast, accurate and most importantly always available thanks to the accompanying smart phones we carry everywhere we go. But, as it gets easier for the consumers to access to a huge amount of information, it gets more difficult for the companies to stand out and to be found because the competition is tough and there is always a bigger company with a bigger marketing budget dominating the field's information flow.

Luckily, the internet era and the rise of digital marketing along with it have brought innovative possibilities enabling low-budgeted, long-term marketing that help start-ups and small businesses to compete against the big companies. The most common ones are content marketing and social media marketing. Marketers worldwide consider content marketing to be the marketing activity that will have the biggest commercial impact on their business and their customers as of 2018 (Statista 2018). It is clear to say that content marketing is recognized as a highly effective digital marketing technique outdistancing for example paid social media advertising and paid search engine marketing, and in today's business world it is where the digital bet should be placed at. Content marketing is popular because with it companies can build a stable online presence with less money than when creating

constantly new paid campaigns. With right efforts, content marketing can shoot the company to the very top of the information flow where the customers are able to find it day after day.

Considering the topicality of digital marketing in today's business world, I find content marketing as a very interesting marketing method to familiarize with. My specialization at the university directed towards digital marketing and communications, I saw content marketing as a perfect way to link these two areas. During my internship in Spain, an opportunity to help a local start-up with its content marketing initiative was presented to me and the commissioning agreement for this thesis was signed with a company called Geowhim Technologies SL. Combining a current topic, which was also in accordance with personal interests, and a start-up project was a great chance for me and resulted in this bachelor's thesis examining the content marketing strategy building.

1.2 Objectives and limitations

The objective of this thesis is to help Geowhim Technologies SL in its content marketing initiative by developing content marketing guidelines that facilitate the company's content marketing strategy building. The company wants to improve its online presence by implementing content marketing strategy to its website in order to gain recognisability in the market and to obtain users for its mobile application Geowhim. The company has a limited marketing budget, which is why it wants to invest to quality and efficiency of the content marketing since right from the beginning.

The guidelines have been developed considering Geowhim Technologies' start-up perspective and the information to them has been gathered from content marketing specialists that have a broad knowledge about the topic and who know the best ways to build a content marketing strategy. As the company is starting their content marketing from the zero, the guidelines have been limited only to the very essential presenting the key strategy elements. Also, the instructions on how the company should apply the guidelines to their strategy has been left out from the thesis leaving the emphasis on understanding the importance of these key elements in the strategy and thereby in the content marketing performance.

According to the company's wishes, the guidelines have been created to be used for the strategy building for the company's website. Therefore, the guidance regarding the content channel is limited to the website and its management as a content platform. However,

most of the guidelines can also be utilized for other publishing channels if the company wants to expand its content marketing later.

1.3 Geowhim Technologies SL

The commissioning company for this thesis is a Spanish start-up called Geowhim Technologies SL which is a company dedicating to IT-services and applications. The company provides a service platform via a mobile application called Geowhim. This application provides a new way to fund one's travelling and to get items between countries and cities with the slogan "make money travelling". Below the company and the Geowhim application are presented more detailed according to the information given by the Chief Marketing Officer and Chief Technical Officer of the company.

1.3.1 Company description

Geowhim Technologies SL was founded in June 2017 in Madrid, Spain by its four founders. The social object of the company is development of applications and computing projects; consultancy and professional computing services as well as commercialization and intermediation of software and hardware products. (Informa 2017) The mission of Geowhim Technologies SL is to be the number one reference among delivery platforms between users worldwide and the vision is to become the leader in connecting people with needs by a mutual benefit and making it more accessible for users to obtain products from other countries (Palai 2017).

The idea for the company and the Geowhim application stemmed from the contemplation of one of the founder members who wanted to find a solution for getting products that were not available in his home country without excessive costs, long delivery times or the hopes that one acquaintance would one day bring them to him. The idea seemed to have prospective for putting into practise and the founder members started to develop the idea with a result of the establishment of the company Geowhim Technologies SL and later the launch of the Geowhim application. (López 2017)

1.3.2 Application description

Geowhim is a free mobile application that matches the demand for an alternative delivery method with an alternative way to fund one's travelling or simply gaining money during travels by offering a peer-to-peer (P2P) network where these demands can meet their

supply by a mutual benefit. The application provides a platform that enables the users to make delivery requests of items to their location by offering a reasonable compensation to the deliverer and the travellers to mark their travelling itineraries, to see if there are pending requests of items in their travel route.

The first version of the application, that was launched in October 2017, consists of three key features; main page with a list of all the requested products starting from the most recent ones, the user profile with a view of own requested products and trips and chat where the users can communicate with each other (image 1). Besides these three key features, there is one important feature that allows the travellers to search products on their own travel routes making it easier to find matching product requests.

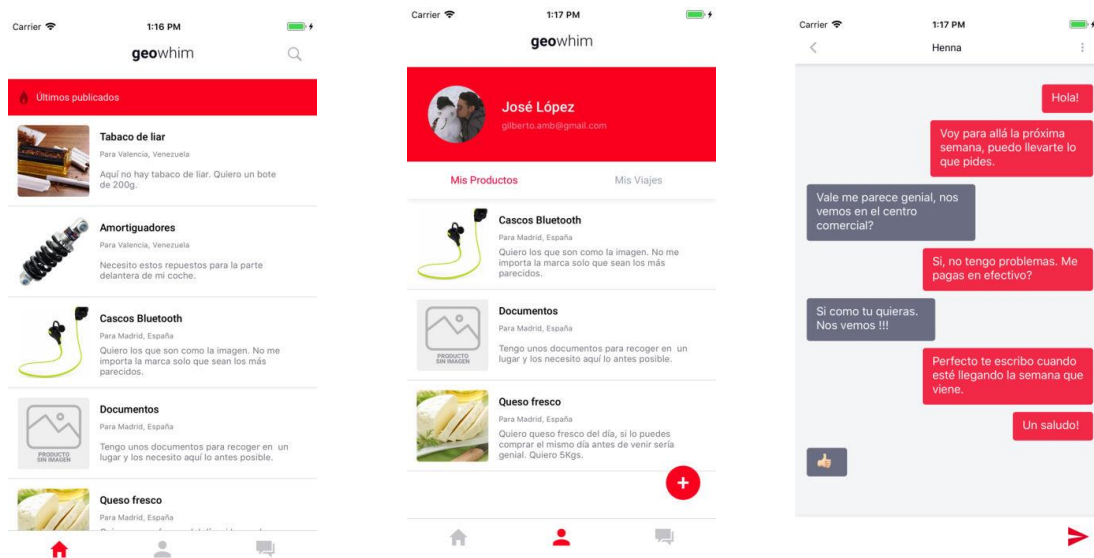


Image 1. The three key features of the Geowhim application; product listing, user profile and chat (Geowhim 2017)

The primary target market for the Geowhim application comprehends the Hispanic world, with the focus on Latin America, which is why the application is at the moment only available in Spanish. The target market was determined as a result of an observation and research done by the founder members of the company. There was a commerce detected on social networks of people offering to bring products between countries and people in a need of products from another country asking for favours in exchange of a commission. The to-be co-founders of Geowhim realized that this could be taken advantage of by moving the people to a specific platform focused only on this type of trading. (López 2017)

Although, the application slogan is “make money travelling” referring to the travellers, the preliminary target market has been chosen based on a necessity in Latin America where buying certain products is too expensive, prohibited or hard to get. For example, in Venezuela the need of medicine and food is huge for political reasons that have driven the country to a situation where both the internal production and import are so low that there is not enough supply for the demand and the people suffer from malnutrition and constantly declining quality of life. (López 2017)

1.4 Key concepts

Audience persona: A fictional generalization of the target audience to who the content marketing is aimed at and to who the content would be useful and of value. (HubSpot 2017)

Content calendar: Content marketing tool helping the content creators to create, publish and govern the content in a structured manner and map the content production to the target audience. (Pulizzi 2014, 132-133)

Content channel: A place where the content is published to so that it is available for the target audience.

Content goal: The purpose and desired outcome for content marketing, creating a foundation for the content marketing strategy and a coherent and motivational direction for the content creators.

Content management system (CMS): “A content management system provides a simple, accessible website interface that can be used to add content to a page in a highly structured manner. The overall approach of a CMS is to allow for the generation of standards-compliant content.” (Technopedia 2018)

Content marketing: Creation and sharing of content for marketing purposes in channels the company either owns or largely controls from the content’s perspective (Leib 2017, 17)

Content marketing strategy: “A content marketing strategy is a plan for building an audience by publishing, maintaining, and spreading frequent and consistent content that educates, entertains, or inspires to turn strangers into fans and fans into customers.” (Farnworth 2016)

Content type: A kind of content used in content marketing repeatedly that has a standardized (agreed-on) structure, format and function. (Rieffer Johnston 2015)

Key performance indicator (KPI): A quantifiable measure that a company uses to estimate its performance over time and to determine the progress in achieving goals. (Investopedia 2018)

Return on investment (ROI): A measure used in business to evaluate efficiency. The ROI measures the return against the cost of the investment from which can be seen whether the investment has brought benefit or loss. (Investopedia 2018)

Search engine optimization (SEO): "Search engine optimization is the process of creating, editing, organizing, and delivering content (including metadata) to increase its potential relevance to specific keywords on web and site search engines." (Halvorson & Rach 2012, 34)

Target audience: Company's potential customers and the people who are tried to be reached with content marketing.

WordPress: One of the most famous free open-source content management systems in the world used as a content platform for websites and blogs.

2 Content marketing strategy

Content marketing strategy is the foundation of content marketing, giving it direction, structure and most importantly purpose. A good strategy does not only focus on the content creation but gives a comprehensive framework for the entire content marketing process covering the planning, development and publishing of the content. Additionally, it works as a map to measure the marketing performance and supports the achievement of goals by maximizing the content's impact to the target audience. (Lieb 2017, 17-18)

The first mistake that decreases the effectiveness of the content marketing is not having a documented strategy. Having a strategy in mind is not enough, no matter how clear it is, because these verbal-only strategies are hard to follow and the focus from the target is lost more easily. (Pulizzi 2014) The sixth annual content marketing research of Content Marketing Institute (2015) shows that 81 percent of the B2C marketers in North America had a content marketing strategy in 2015 but only 37 percent of them had documented the strategy. From the companies with a documented content marketing strategy, 58 percent felt that their content marketing was effective, whereas in general, less companies (only 38%) considered themselves effective at content marketing, where the effectiveness equalled as accomplishing the overall objectives. By looking at these numbers, it is clear that content marketers recognize that a documented strategy really affects positively to the content marketing performance and helps achieving the objectives.

The bottom line is that if a company wants to invest in content marketing, it requires also an investment in content marketing strategy. Content marketing without a strategy is basically just online publishing with no real reason or planned intention. (Lieb 2017, 18) This is why content marketing should be implemented according to a strategy instead of rushing into action with the mentality of "learning as we go", even though learning and improving are significant factors in a successful process. The strategy can be easily modified and developed further if needed, but it is important to document also all the changes so that the strategy maintains its purpose as a directive framework for the content marketing.

It has been stated by many content marketing professionals, that to create a coherent and efficient content marketing strategy the company should find answers to six strategic questions that guide the strategy building. These questions are why, who, what, where, when and how, commonly known as the five w's and h of strategy, and they are typically used in journalism but also work perfectly for content marketing strategy building as they provide straight and focused answers from which the strategy is easy to be build from (Nite 2017).

To ensure that answering to the questions provide the desired guidance for the strategy building, they should be completed into full sentences that indicate clearly what kind of answers are looked for. The good thing about these strategic questions is that they cannot be answered with a simple yes or no but require descriptive answers that bring more benefit the more detailed they are. So, the full sentenced strategic questions to guide the content marketing strategy building are:

1. Why do we need content marketing?
2. Who is our target audience?
3. What is the audience looking for?
4. Where can I reach the audience?
5. When should we publish the content?
6. How will we measure the marketing performance?

Even though all the above questions play an important role in the strategy, the first and the second question are the most fundamental for the marketing performance efficiency because at the end content marketing is about creating and sharing online content for a specific audience in order to reach a certain goal. The first two questions form the base of the content marketing strategy because the goal and the target audience are steadier elements than the others as the focus should be in bringing value for the right people for the right reasons. For example, if after a half a year of website content marketing the company notices that the target audience can be reached better through social media sites, the content distribution should be developed to new channels.

These six strategic questions and the elements they represent in a content marketing strategy have been studied in the below chapters one by one and additionally recommendations for Geowhim Technologies have been developed based on the theory and by taking into account the company's case.

3 Content goal, target audience and content types

The purpose of the content marketing and the audience to who the content is created for are the focal points of a content marketing strategy, and once these two elements have been determined, the rest of the strategy is easy to build around them. This chapter discusses the determination of the content goal, the understanding of the target audience and audience persona identification, as well as the different content types and their adequacy to help capture target audience's attention and to reach the goal.

3.1 Content goal determination

Before defining the content goal, it is necessary to distinguish the words goal and motivation to understand the importance of it for the content strategy. Goal can be defined as a result or an outcome toward which effort is being directed whereas motivation is what provides a reason to act or accomplish something and willingness to make an effort (Dictionary.com, 2018). According to this, content goal can be defined as the purpose and desired outcome for the company's content marketing, creating a foundation for the content marketing strategy and a coherent and motivational direction for the content creators.

To define a clear content goal, the company needs to really understand the need of the content marketing for the business as well as the customers' informational needs it could cover and whether these needs are big enough to create a full strategy around it (Pulizzi 2014, 94-95). The goal is created by asking these questions:

- What is the need for content marketing and is it big enough to spend time and resources to?
- What is wanted to achieve through content marketing and is it motivating enough?
- What value would the content marketing bring to the (potential) customers?

Once the company has answered to these questions, the content goal can be formed.

For Geowhim Technologies, the goal was determined together with the company's CMO and CTO in the beginning of this thesis project. In an interview, the above three questions were asked and as a result of the answers, two content goals were defined for the company: raising brand awareness and website lead conversion. The decision of these goals was based on the recent establishment of the company meaning that it is in a stage which requires powerful brand promotion for a customer base creation and positioning in the tar-

get market, as the company or its product are not yet familiar for the consumers. A successful lead conversion in the company's case is counted to be a download of the application where the lead converts to a user of the application. This goal is essential to be met for the functionality of the application as it depends on the exchange between users.

3.2 Target Audience and audience personas

Once the content goal has been set comes the identification of the target audience that represents the who that is being reached through content marketing and to who the company wants to provide engaging content. It is very important to specify the target audience for content marketing because in today's world where the customers can choose how and when they engage to marketing, the basic marketing rule "know your customers" gets a completely new significance and importance. Before the company starts planning the content creation and publishing, it should take time to identify the target audience. In the long run it saves a lot of time and resources and it also brings all the company's content creators to the same page regarding to who the information is provided to so that the content is more coherent. (Pulizzi 2014, 94, Revella 2015, 5)

The most effective way to specify the target audience is by defining audience personas. There are variations in marketing of this term, such as buyer persona, marketing persona and target persona, but the term audience persona is used in this thesis since it is easy to associate with the content marketing target audience that is being referred to.

Audience personas are fictional generalizations of the people among the company's target audience to who the content is going to be aimed at and to who the content would be useful and of value (HubSpot 2017). The audience persona is an effective tool for the marketers because it reminds them that the target audience consists of real people and it creates a sense of a human connection between the content creator and the audience. The human connection helps the marketers to reflect the engaging process and decision making of the people they want to reach meanwhile minimizing the risk of letting own opinions and judgements distort the actual target. (Revella 2015, 11)

The audience persona is built with characteristics, such as basic demographic information, goals, challenges and preferences of a considered 'typical or potential customer' of the company. The audience persona must be detailed enough, however without irrelevant or false information. There should be one audience persona for each customer type the company recognizes, because each type has a distinctive engaging process meaning that different kind of approaches from the company are needed. (Pulizzi 2014, 94-97) For

example, one customer type might subscribe to a newsletter during the first visit in the website whereas another customer type needs to investigate the reliability of the information the company gives before choosing to receive it by email or one customer makes a purchase decision only seeing the product and another one wants to know about the company values before the purchase. So, the company must understand that target audience consists of people with not only different engaging processes but diverse needs that require different content in order to be fulfilled.

When a company has already a customer base, there are many ways to identify the audience personas, such as by interviewing customers and potential customers or by collecting user information from the company's social media sites or website and then analysing the data on what basis the most accurate audience personas can be created (HubSpot 2017). However, in a case of a start-up, like Geowhim Technologies SL, when the customer base is too small to collect accurate data about the target audience, marketers need to find other methods to identify the audience personas and relying more on presumptions. In this case it is more relevant to know who are not considered as a target audience and by excluding the people that are not the fit to belong to the target audience the real target audience is easier to shape (Nite 2017).

Geowhim's target audience consists of travellers and buyers, and both audiences need identified audience personas. I have used the information given by the CMO and CTO of the company regarding their market research to create six audience persona models for the company that can be used as a reference in the actual audience persona creation. There are three personas for both target audiences, with persona profiles including information about gender, age, nationality, occupation and the user type (traveller/buyer) the persona would represent for Geowhim with a small description about the interests or needs related to the service provided by the application. These model audience personas can be found at the end of this thesis in the appendix 2.

3.3 Content type selection

In content marketing content can be defined as any kind of written, visual or audio-visual material that is being created and published online. Content type, however, is a kind of content that is used repeatedly and that has a standardized structure. Content type usage brings a lot of benefits both for the content creators as well as the content consumers from which the most valuable ones are the following:

- They give content creators patterns of organization (maybe even templates) to work with, simplifying their job and ensuring that they include all necessary content elements.
- They provide a common communication tool for content creators
- They create opportunities for content reuse that don't exist when content is left unstructured.
- They prepare content for automation.
- They give consumers a consistent, more pleasant and helpful experience.

(Rieffer Johnston 2015)

Content types can be classified by function and format and these two classifications are viewed in the chapters below. The distinction of content formats and types helps the content creators to understand the strengths and the advantage each type of content holds because certain content fits to deliver different messages, to achieve different goals.

3.3.1 Content by function

All content serves some function and according to a digital marketing expert Rebecca Lieb (2011, 19-45), all content can be categorized by four different functionalities that are entertaining content, educating content, informing content and utility content (figure 1).

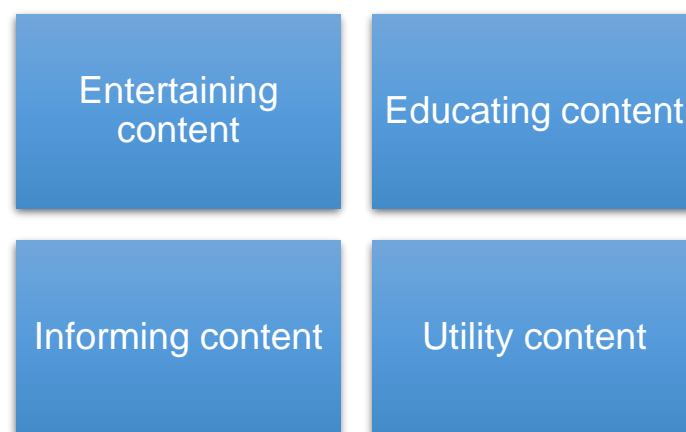


Figure 1: Content functionality categories (Lieb 2011, 19-45)

Using entertaining content is a way to tell a story in a way that is intriguing, engaging and most importantly, entertaining (Lieb 2011, 19). This is a type of content that people recall, spread and especially remember. Content Marketing Institute describes (2018) this type of

'storytelling' as the foundation of the companies' future content development and a method of building strong relationships with the customers.

Educating and informing content on the other hand is accurate, fact-based information and created to build knowledge, credibility and understanding for the customers regarding the company and its product or service. This kind of content is powerful because nowadays the consumers turn to the internet when they are in a search of information and a company who offers information, is usually considered to be a reliable one. (Lieb 2011, 27-28)

Finally, the utility content is something that provides help and is useful for the customer in one way or another. Utility content can be for example an interactive tool that guides the customers in their buying decision or puts them to a position where they really weight all the available options. (Lieb 2011, 39-45) Sometimes the utility content can also offer something totally new, like Nike has done with its interactive NIKEiD custom-shoe design tool that enables the customers to design their personalized shoes choosing the model, materials and colours of the shoe, offering a totally new option that is out of the pre-selection (Nike 2018).

Content Marketing Institute suggests branded content that people would love and share for companies that are aiming at building brand awareness and educating content about the company, its business and the offered product/service if the goal is lead conversion (Goliger 2015). Applying these Content Marketing Institution's suggestions, Geowhim Technologies SL should focus on the entertaining and educating content and this way start building the brand image meanwhile making the target audience aware and interested in the Geowhim application. Entertaining content can be for example stories about the customer experiences, demonstrations of the application usage or the company's history. Educating content should on the other hand focus on giving information about the application and the peer-to-peer business model building this way confidence towards the application and the company. Nonetheless, any content categories are no good to exclude completely and keep the options open because situations always change and using of informing or utility content might become relevant later.

3.3.2 Content by format

Content format gives each piece of content its recognizable form so that the content type can be detected only by looking. Content format consists of different elements, for example a newsletter can have a format including a headline, subheading, date, body text and

a hyperlink or a product description including a picture and a descriptive list of the qualities whereas a video consists of pictures, sounds and optionally text. (Riefer Johnston 2015) As we are all already used to consume content on daily basis, we are most likely to recognize formats that are commonly used (see image 2).

The formalized content favours the content marketing from three different sides. Firstly, it permits a consistent, automated and easy content creation for the company as the format elements can be mapped to each piece of content. Secondly, it facilitates the consumption of the content in a predictable way so that the audience finds the message given in the content. Thirdly, it helps the search engines to read and understand the content's elements when they are tagged with metadata and this way the content has higher possibilities to appear in the organic searches. (Riefer Johnston 2015) This topic is discussed further on in the chapter 4.2.



Image 2: Common content formats used in content marketing listed by HubSpot (2017)

The content formats do not have to be pre-determinate, but the company can design its own content format templates and rules. As in the previous chapter it was suggested that Geowhim Technologies should focus on entertaining and educating content, the company must consider what content formats would support the message the best. For example, the application usage would make sense to demonstrate with "how to"-videos and pictures

as the user can visualize him/herself using the application and educative content about the functions with FAQ's pages or white papers.

4 Content channel management

In content marketing it is important to recognise the difference between content channel and content platform because they are not each other's synonyms, but two things related to one another which can cause a misunderstanding. Content channel is the place where the content is published to so that it is available for the target audience. A channel can be for example a company website, a social media site or a blog. Content platform however, is a software or a system that is designed to facilitate the content publishing to the channel as well as to enhance the content management.

Content can be distributed to multiple channels or optimized to a single channel. When starting content marketing, it is recommendable to start with a single-channel, that is typically a company website, which will create a base where other channels can be linked to. I consider that it is better to first manage one channel well and eventually move on to multi-channel distribution rather than trying to split the effort to multiple channels right from the beginning because it might result in disorder and inefficiency. However, using whatever channel, as the only channel is not a recommended choice either. This is because some channels, mostly social media sites, have strictly controlled content platforms with little variation possibilities in things such as content positioning in the site, text character and video duration limitations, to mention a few, that put limits to the content creation.

With the single-channel distribution, the best channel option is an owned one with a platform that can be customized. Firstly, having an owned content channel and platform to publish own content means a full control over the content marketing and secondly, by owning the channel, relevant data about the marketing performance and audience behaviour can be collected. And the best of all, this data is private and controllable in a way the company chooses to. (Pulizzi 2014, 215) For this reason, Geowhim Technologies has decided to focus on the website content marketing before beginning to distribute content to other channels. Building the company website into a content channel makes perfect sense because the content marketing of the company will be carried out by the associates without greater external help making it more reasonable to centralize the resources first to the website content marketing. The website, when built to act as a content platform, can provide a lot of information for the company that guides the future content marketing giving it new directions to for example channels where the target audience can be reached even better.

4.1 Content management system

Content management system (CMS) is a system providing a simple and accessible web-site interface by allowing the users with defined access to create, add and publish content directly to the Web and edit it from anywhere at any time. Its overall approach is to enable content publishing and managing in a highly structured manner and to allow a generation of standards-compliant content. (Techopedia 2018)

Utilizing a content management system is a great way to turn a website into a practical content platform and this is what has been chosen to be used for Geowhim Technologies. In the market there is a wide offering of different content management systems that can be installed to the website but the most recommended one for the company is WordPress, one of the world's best open-source content management system. WordPress is a great option for Geowhim Technologies due to the following features and advantages the system provides:

- It is totally free of charge and doesn't have license fees
- All the data gained is owned by the company
- It is easy to install and updatable
- It offers simplicity and flexibility to the website government
- Content management is easy with its content publishing tools
- It gives unlimited possibilities with custom content types, themes and designs
- It can be extended with plugins

(WordPress 2018)

For using WordPress CMS, the company only needs an owned domain name (URL), a web host and a person with IT-skills to install the site. All of these three things have been assured to be covered by the Chief Technical Officer of the company, who will oversee the technical side of the website formation and management. Geowhim Technologies SL has a purchased domain name that will be applied to the site.

4.2 Search engine optimization

After having content published on the website, it is important to make sure that the audience is able to access it. The target audience will not be able to access the website if they do not know what the domain of the website is and don't have any way of finding it without

knowing what the domain is. In order to make sure that the target audience finds the content, it is important to appear in the search engines, such as Google, that allow the people to search websites by writing phrases or keywords in order to find content of interest.

These search engines have rules and ways of indexing the content of websites on their pages and for this the websites need to indicate to the search engines how to index the content, what to index and what not. However, if the website does not indicate this, the search engines index the site according to their rules. This is where "search engine optimization" plays a very important role, which is simply establishing keywords, titles and description of each published content so that the search engines can achieve a list of the website once the user types these phrases or words. The idea of this is to achieve with the published content in the content management system a connection between a phrase like "budget trip to Latin America" and that the content of Geowhim Technologies appears explaining what the application can do.

Google's Search Quality team remarks (2018), that in search engine optimization (SEO) the importance is in modifying and optimizing the website to serve the user's needs by helping the search engines to understand the site and the content in it better, so that they appear in the searches. This optimization is done by assigning text-form metadata, such as titles and descriptions to the site and to each piece of content in it, because that is what the search engines look for when they are sorting out content for the search results (Halvorson & Rach 2012, 52, 123) Google recommends (2018) the website optimization as follows:

- Create unique and accurate titles to each page on the website
- Create descriptions to summarize each page's content
- Use headings to emphasize important text-content
- Give descriptive names for images
- Use words in all sub-domains
- Include relevant keywords (not excessively) to every content and page

These recommendations by Google should be also utilized for the search engine optimization in the Geowhim Technologies' website with a help of the WordPress SEO plugins that are introduced further on. But before being able to create well optimized metadata, it is a must to understand what the target audience might be searching for. This is done by finding the most relevant keywords as suggested below.

4.2.1 SEO tools

Each search engine has a way to prioritize and give a list of pages found according to the searched words, this way is known as "algorithm" each search engine explains how its algorithm works. So, to do search engine optimization on the website, the company must be clear about this algorithm. For example, Google's search engine has a section called "How Search Works" (2018) where it explains how the algorithm works in addition to a tool "Google Search Console" (2018) to view all indexed pages, control errors and more, in order to improve the search appearance.

In the search engine optimization, keywords are the key because as the text-form metadata is what matters to the search engines and the more keywords are relevant for the target audience the more matching searches there will be. The company must consider what words the target audience might use to search for content and determine the usefulness of the words with keyword research tools. (Lieb 2011, 97-98) For this, Google offers two free tools that help discovering search term keywords; Google Keyword Planner and Google Trends but besides the tools, it is important to understand the target audience, which is why the company need the earlier identified audience personas.

Google Keyword Planner is a tool provided by Google AdWords that helps finding new keywords that are related to the company and to see the search volumes of each keyword. Using the tool is easy and by filling in small description about the site and its content and targeting the search the tool gives a list of suggested keyword variations. Google Trends, on the other hand, is a tool to explore and compare search trends by time, location and popularity. (Google 2018) A combined use of these two tools gives very valuable data about the target audience's search behaviour.

Lieb also mentions (2011, 98-99) that the trick for the keyword creation is to be specific and not use broad terms that are unlikely to create matches. She highlights three characteristics a good keyword has, and they are strong relevance to the content on the site, relatively high search volume meaning that people search for the term, and relatively low competition making it more probable to be ranked well in the search engines. Google still in its own SEO guidelines (2018) reminds that even though keyword optimization is important for the visibility, the ones who hope to rank well in the searches should focus on creating content for their audience not for the search engines.

Adding SEO -plugins, that extend the content management system's functionality and improve the site's optimization capability, is also a great and easy way to optimize the WordPress based website. The plugins make sure the content on the page is optimized in the best possible way by enabling more automated text-form metadata input with assigned boxes to each data.

The plugins can be added easily straight from the web through WordPress plugins or manually by uploading the plugin files to the server and then activating on the site (WordPress 2018). There is a wide collection of SEO -plugins in WordPress from where everyone can choose one that suits best for the need but at least in the beginning, before being familiarized with the different alternatives, the company should go with the most complete one which has good ratings and reviews from the users and which is actively updated.

The number one rated plugin is Yoast SEO, which has more than five million active installations among all the WordPress users. This plugin is recommendable to be activated to the Geowhim Technologies' site because it contains a solid SEO toolset. It contains tools such as an advanced sitemap function that helps the search engines to crawl the site and collect data to be matched for searches, a full control over the site navigation tracers, metadata templating tool and a snippet preview tool showing how the content would appear on search results (see image 3) (WordPress 2018). There are other alternatives that the company can also choose from the WordPress's SEO -plugin collection, even though after considering the different alternatives, Yoast SEO would be the most suited one for the company's needs at the beginning.

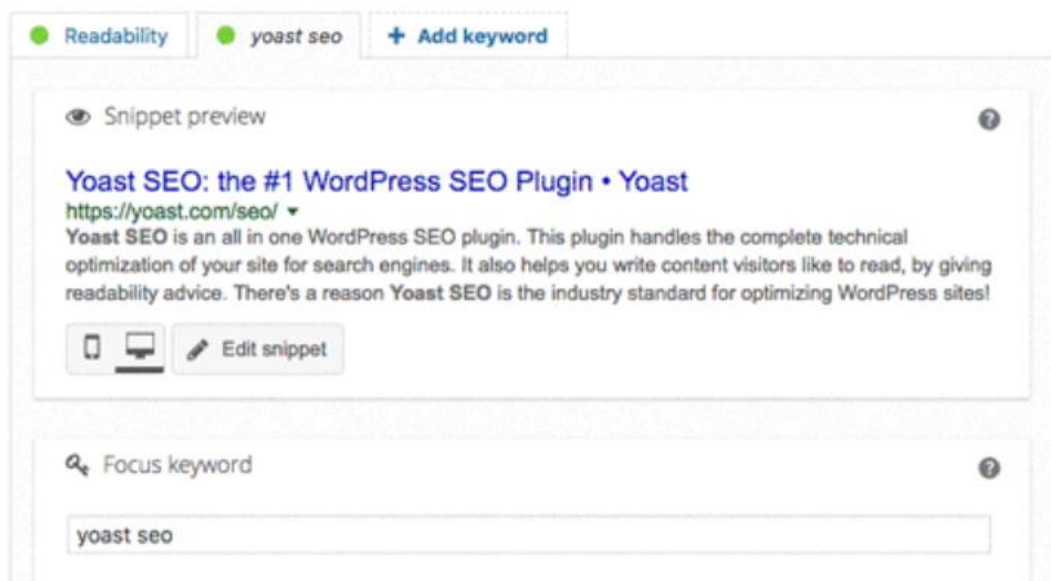


Image 3: Yoast SEO-plugin's tool to easily enter metadata to content and preview the content's appearance on search engines in order to assure the best possible optimization (WordPress 2018)

5 Content publishing with content calendar

Content calendar, also known as editorial calendar, is an important long-term content marketing tool that helps the company's content creators to manage and keep track of the content governance as well as map the content production to the target audience (Pulizzi 2014, 132-133). A useful content calendar is more than just a calendar with tasks assigned to certain dates but includes elements that are useful for the company's everyday content governance such as prioritization etiquettes, user identification, comment areas, checklists and deadline alerts, to mention a few. Important is to find and customize the calendar for the company's needs.

There are many content calendar base options available in the market. There are both free and paid ones, ready-to-use and customizable ones as well as online and ones that need an installation. For a small start-up like Geowhim Technologies, the most logical option is a free calendar base that can be used from different devices and accessible for all the concerned people in the company. Good options like this are Google Calendar, Trello and WordPress plugin calendars (when using this CMS) such as Editorial Calendar.

Google Calendar is Google's free online calendar that can be also downloaded as an application to mobile devices. This calendar, in its simplicity, holds all the basic elements for a content calendar as it enables user invitations, shared calendar view with other users, commentary fields and notifications. Its strength is its connection with Google's other products, yet its weakness is that it is designed more for an everyday schedule-keeping rather than for business use, unless purchasing Google Suite that makes the calendar more advanced and more suitable for companies. (Google 2018)

Trello is a free project and task management system which, when used in a calendar view, is perfect base for a content calendar. It enables organization and prioritization of work in customizable boards that can be individual or shared for a team collaboration. Trello is clearly better targeted for business use than Google Calendar due to its wider selection of features and power-ups that support also well the content governance. Additionally, Trello's visual appearance using colours, shapes and user indicator photos makes the user experience pleasant. (Trello 2018)

WordPress also offers content calendar plugins that can be installed to the content management system making the scheduling and content governance highly integrated. The most installed WordPress calendar plugin, with over 50 000 installations, is Editorial Cal-

endar, which is an option worth considering. Besides the calendar view of the tasks, it enables content quick-edit, post drafts' management and multiple author content modification directly in the site. However, these plugins weaknesses are that it is mainly targeted for blogs and blog post content types and it has been designed to give an overview of the content governance not to give a comprehensive content calendar tool set. (WordPress 2018)

6 Performance measurement

As content marketing is used as a mean to change or maintain the behaviour of the audience to achieve a certain goal, the company must also measure the behaviour what it hopes to have an impact on. In other words, the company must recognize what kind of information is relevant to collect in order to measure the content marketing's effectiveness and to analyse the performance. This is important, because without measuring and analysing the content marketing performance there is very little chance to know whether the content marketing is producing results that enable the goal achievement or not. Also applying improvements is difficult if there are no clear indications of what works and what does not.

Return on investment (ROI), that is commonly used to evaluate the efficiency of the company's investment to a certain business process is a good measure to be used as it clearly indicates whether the investment is profitable or not. It is calculated by dividing the total of the investment's benefit by the cost of the investment and it is indicated as a percentage. A positive ROI means that the investment is efficient and brings benefits, whereas a negative ROI means that the investment is bringing loss and is not at all efficient. (Investopedia 2018) Return on Investment is not a measure that can be calculated in short-term but needs longer time periods of information gathering for it to provide analysable data. Considering that content marketing is a long-term marketing method that takes time to begin to generate impact, ROI is an excellent performance measure to be used.

6.1 Measuring the return on investment

To measure the content marketing performance with the return on investment, the content goals need to be broken down into measurable key performance indicators. Pulizzi and Rose (Pulizzi 2014, 282-283) have distinguished three separate segments of content marketing KPIs that are primary indicators, secondary indicators and user indicators, calling this the content marketing ROI pyramid (see figure 2).

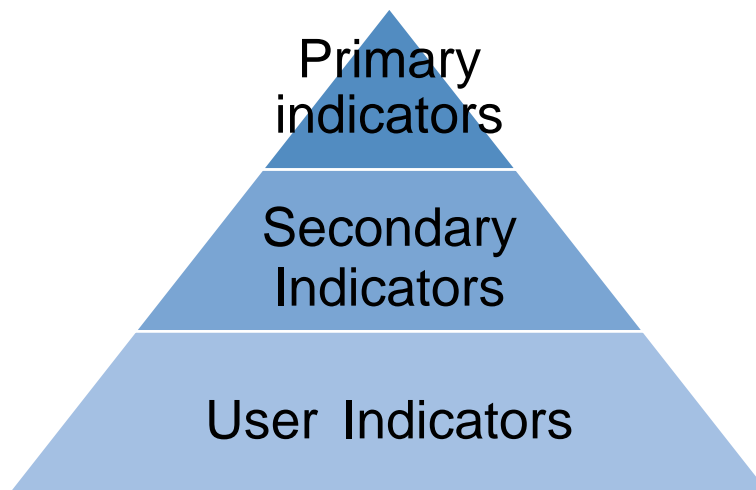


Figure 2: Pulizzi's and Rose's Content Marketing Pyramid to measure content marketing ROI (Pulizzi 2014, 282-283)

The first segment, starting from the bottom of the pyramid, considers the user indicators, referring to data that can be collected on daily basis, such as page visits, the number of search appearances and most viewed content. These user indicators' purpose is to gather data about the daily action around the content creating a base for the performance measurement and helping the detection of the secondary indicators. These indicators can be also considered as short-term content goals. With the secondary indicators the connection between the content and the behaviour change can be already detected in smaller scales such as the increase of site visits through a certain content or improved search appearance. (Pulizzi 2014, 282-283)

On the top of the pyramid are the primary indicators from which the ROI can be calculated from. This segment is considerably smaller than the other two segments including only few metrics that take more time, data and insights in order it to be measured. The primary indicators cannot be measured well without the user and secondary indicators that provide calculable up-to-date data. (Pulizzi 2014, 282-283) These indicators can be for example the total number of converted leads through the website.

To utilize this pyramid model to measure Geowhim Technologies' content marketing efforts and calculate the return on investment, the determined content goals for the company need to be broken down to KPIs and these indicators placed accordingly to the pyramid segments. Pulizzi notes, that each content goal should have a separate pyramid to clarify the measurement (Pulizzi 2014, 282), which is why two pyramid models have been

created for the company; one for brand awareness building and the other for lead conversion (see figures 3a and 3b).

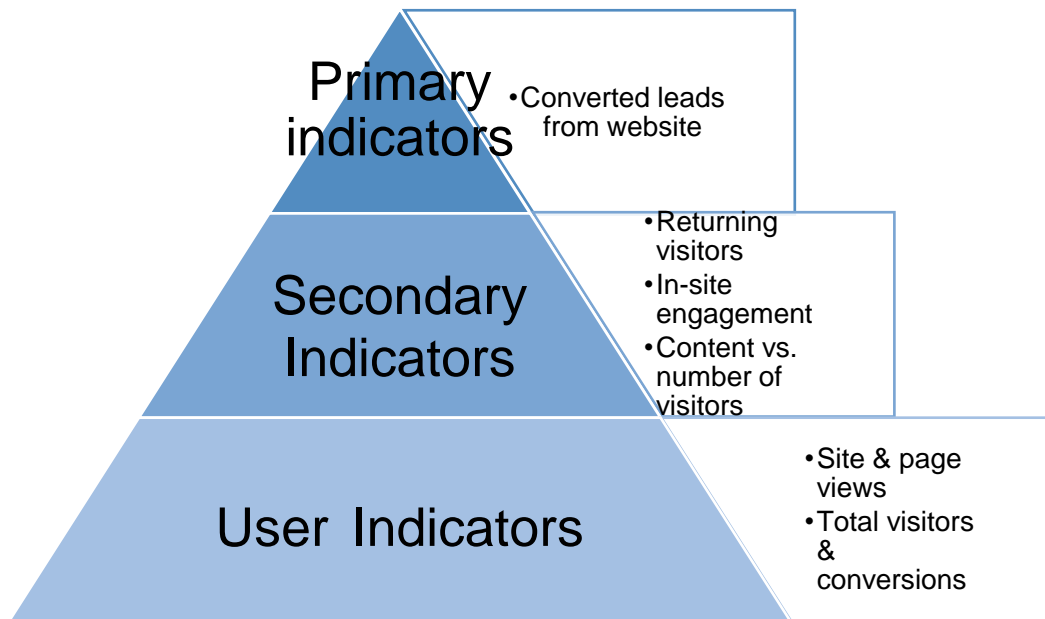


Figure 3a: The pyramid model with indicators to measure Geowhim Technologies' content marketing efficiency in lead conversion

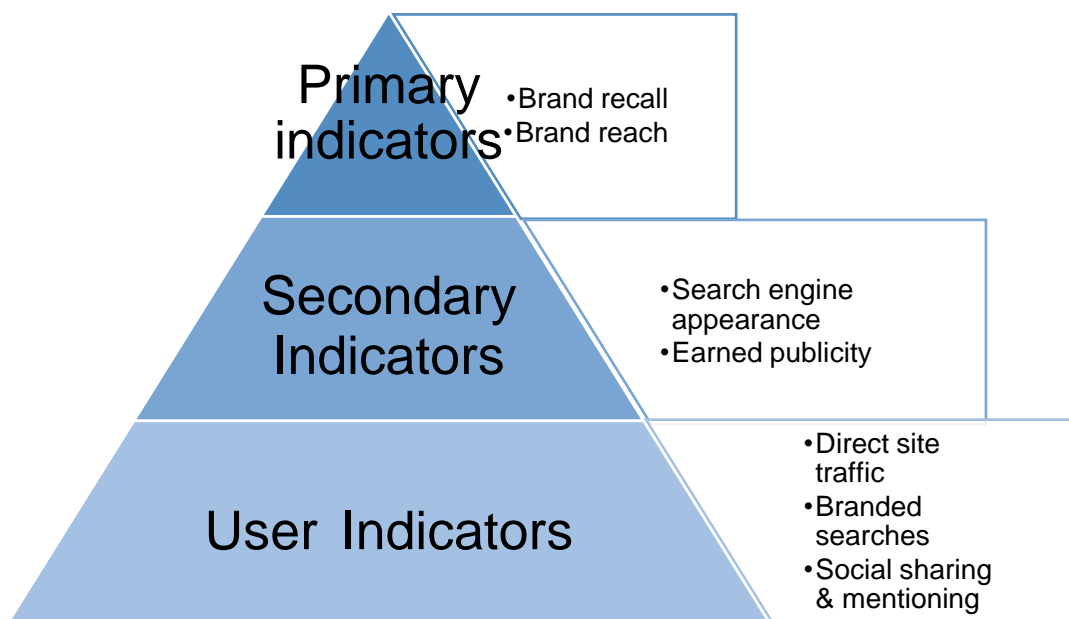


Figure 3b: The pyramid model with indicators to measure Geowhim Technologies' content marketing efficiency in brand awareness building

The lead conversion pyramid (figure 3b) focuses on the indicators from which the connection between the content marketing and converted leads can be measured and the ROI

calculated. The focal point is on the website traffic, visitors' engagement to the content and the application as well as the number of converted leads. These indicators will help analysing in the company's case and calculating the ROI percentage from the amount of converted leads acquired from the website content marketing.

The pyramid for brand awareness building focuses on how well the brand is known and reached out. This pyramid consists of indicators that focus on metrics such as direct site traffic, social shares and mentions, and the primary indicators for this content goal are brand recall and brand reach. Brand reach in this case means the estimated online exposure of the brand through searches and sharing, whereas brand recall refers to the estimated number of site visitors who remember the brand and are specifically interested in its offering. It is important to keep in mind that measuring brand awareness and especially proving the benefit of it, is not as easy as lead conversion measurement because the connection between investment in brand awareness and its contribution to the company's revenue is challenging to find yet not impossible when knowing what to measure (Lee White 2018).

6.2 Analytics tools

The website analysing is nowadays facilitated with the assistance of digital analytics tools that are regularly collecting data from the site and generating reports of the website visitors' behaviours. The tools help to adjust the content align for the wanted impact meanwhile reducing the manual work of the marketers. There are many tools available for free or with low-cost so taking advantage of them does not even turn out costly for the company.

Google for instance offers two analysis solutions that are called Google Analytics and Google Tag Manager. Both tools are freemiums meaning that the simple version, which already comes with a wide set of functions, is for free and for accessing to even more comprehensive set requires a paid sign-up. Google Analytics is a tool used for forming audience insights around the collected data from the site and Google Tag Manager on the other hand tracks the user behaviour across the website using tags to for example track the conversions, page views and clicks and to collect measurable data that can later be used in calculating the return on investment. (Google, 2018)

Another favoured tool is Hotjar which is a website analytics tool charged according to the number of daily site viewers so that the starting businesses' plans turn out low-cost. This tool's most known functions are the site heatmapping and site recording that show where

the visitors moves on the site, how far do they scroll and what do they click. This way can be figured out what content intrigue conversion and what may cause an abandonment of the site. (Hotjar 2018)

Comparison of the available tools is recommended so that the most suitable tool to collect needed data for measuring the return on investment for the content goals is found. When making the selection, it is good to ask whether the tool can provide accurate information that can show the efficiency of the content marketing.

7 Discussion

This chapter summarizes the given content marketing strategy building guidelines and gives further development proposals. Finally, the last chapter provides a short self-evaluation of my own learning during this thesis project and thoughts afterwards.

7.1 Summary

To conclude the work, the content marketing initiative should start with a documented strategy that has been based around the six strategic questions why, who, what, where, when and how. In content marketing strategy building the answers to these questions represent the six key elements the strategy should contain that are content goal, target audience, content, content channel, content publishing and measurement. The most essential elements are the goal and the audience as in content marketing the importance is in bringing value for the right people for the right cause and further on knowing how to do it.

The best way to start the strategy building is by determining the content goal. Content marketing requires a long-term commitment which is why it is essential to understand the need of it for the business and for the customers/potential customers in order to trigger motivation and give directions. After the goal is determined, the company must spend time to understand the content marketing target audience. As proven in this work, the most efficient way to identify the target audience is by creating audience personas to who the content would be valuable and interesting. This can be done through interviews, surveys, market researches or in a start-up's case by delimiting the audience with detecting what kind of people are not fit as the target audience.

When the goal and target audience are set, the company must decide what type of content to use to reach the audience and fulfil the goal. The content can be classified according to the function and the format and it is important to understand what content best delivers the desired message in a way that captures the audience's attention and generates the hoped behaviour.

In order to get the content to the target audience's reach, it must be published in an organized and consistent way through a content channel, which in this work has been the company's website. For the website to serve as a content channel it should be built using a content management system that facilitates the content management and publishing. and furthermore, the site should be optimized for search engines so that the target audience can find the content.

Finally, knowing that planning and acting are not enough but that measuring the content marketing performance is the only way to make evidence based and rational improvements that increase the possibilities to achieve the content goal.

By following the guidelines and recommendations given in this work, Geowhim Technologies can build a content marketing strategy for their website that covers the key elements affecting the marketing performance and effectiveness.

7.2 Proposals for the future

The guidelines developed for the company are mostly theoretical leaving space for the company's own decisions regarding on how to use them in the strategy building as well as a possibility for other companies with a similar case as Geowhim Technologies' to utilize them for their own content marketing strategy building.

The guidelines can be further developed in many ways as content marketing is a very complex entity which is influenced by many varieties that might be convenient to be included as the key strategy element. For example, a determination of the content marketing communication style is one element that would be a good addition to the core strategy as it can have a subliminal effect on the brand recognisability. With the communication style I am referring to textual characteristics such as voice, tone and point of view, and visual characteristics such as colour, picture and logo usage in the content.

As Geowhim Technologies will start the building of the content marketing strategy after this thesis project, I would be happy to hear how the guidelines helped the company's strategy building process and how could I have developed them more useful.

7.3 Evaluation of own learning

The company gave me practically full freedom to develop the content marketing strategy guidelines for them. This was a new, yet interesting, project for me as I had studied digital marketing at the university as a minor and find content marketing very interesting marketing method. The only defining done by the company was that the channel would be the company's website and the rest I could develop according to my own skills, knowledge and opinions.

On the other hand, the fact that I used a lot of time studying the theory resulted in lacking other empirical data than my own conclusions based on the theory. Including more information from related interviews, surveys and statistics would have brought different perspectives to the guidelines and justified the suggestions for the company better. The theory gathering was harder than I expected because content marketing is a topic where there is quite a lot of room for subjective opinions and views of the best practices according to different experiences. This really made me see the importance of comparing sources and considering the credibility of each source.

As this thesis was my first long project including such a comprehensive study of a single topic, I came to realize that my capability of managing large entities need improvement together with my essay writing skills and this turned out to be my weakness in this project. However, I feel that even though the textual outcome did not turn out as I hoped, I was able to transmit valuable information for Geowhim Technologies and the company can utilize this information for content marketing strategy building.

Afterwards thinking, the choice of using the zipper method was not necessarily the best structural choice, as my way of writing and thinking did not adapt to this structure the way I planned. Using more common structure where the theory is presented first followed by the empirical and commission-oriented parts would have been a better choice. With this method I was not able to bring up the company's point of view strong enough even though I am sure that I am able to provide valuable, directed guidance for the company in person once they start the strategy building.

After all, this thesis was a huge professional learning experience for me and it did not only provide me with knowledge regarding content marketing and strategy building but also helped me develop myself professionally through both mistakes and success.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview summary with the CMO and CTO of Geowhim Technologies SL (Palai & López Ambrosino, 2 December 2017)

The interview was conducted in Spanish and the most relevant answers have been compacted and translated into English.

1. How did you identify the market for the Geowhim application?

To keep it short: currently in the social media can be seen a type of “commercial” of people asking things and offering to bring things between countries and we see that this can be exploited. This exchange happens in platforms such as Facebook in general groups from which most typical ones are groups of people with the same nationality as “Venezuelans in Madrid” for example. We administrate a site for immigrants in Madrid that has almost 5000 members and we are able to see that there is necessity of obtaining products from outside and people are interesting in helping, but the action seems to move slowly because the platform does not support it well enough.

2. Who do you recognise to be the main audience to use Geowhim?

They majority of the people seem come from Latino America, especially Venezuela, where the supply is too small, and products are hard to get from outside due to economic problems of the country, monetary exchanging problems, shipping prohibitions or excessive costs etc. People are asking others to bring products such as medicine and food that they cannot purchase home against a reasonable payment.

3. What are the mission and vision of Geowhim?

Our mission is to be the number one reference in shipping/delivery platforms between users worldwide and our vision is to become leaders by connecting people with needs and making it more accessible for users to obtain products from other countries.

3. What is the need for content marketing and is it big enough to spend time and resources to?

We are a start-up and the consumers are not aware of the existence of the application and our company well enough and the application needs to get more users that participate

to the exchange and its peer-to-peer business model. The cost of content marketing is low, so the biggest resource spent will be time as there are no hired employees entered to the company so far.

4. What is wanted to achieve through content marketing and is it motivating enough?

Implementing a content marketing strategy for the company's website is expected to increase the knowledge of the brand in the market and to bring organic growth to the number of users of the application. If the application can reach, let's say, thousand monthly downloads, there are higher possibilities of monetizing the application and that it awakes the interest of investors.

5. What value would the content marketing bring to the (potential) customers?

Firstly, the content would make the potential customers conscious about this new available service/platform (the application) which does not only bring value for us, but for the audience as the service itself can bring value for them. Secondly, informational content about us could bring security for the customers as people tend to be a bit more prejudiced when they are doing "business" with other peers rather than with a company. Therefore, we wish to create content that establishes security in the user by explaining the function of the business model, the user rights, instructions etc.

Appendix 2. Audience persona models

Persona	Persona profile	User type for Geowhim
Traveller 1	Man, 27, Colombian. Entrepreneur. In a long-term relationship. Loves his country and culture and likes to travel inside Colombia and to other countries in Latin America during his vacations. Has friends and family members in Perú, Argentina and other cities in Colombia.	Traveller inside Latin America delivering products between these countries. Considering the use of the application as an additional way to gain extra money while travelling.
Traveller 2	Woman, 25, Spanish. Single. Recent university graduate taking a gap year travelling in Latin America. Interested in Latin cultures, open-minded and looking for experiences.	Young traveller with a lot of destinations. Considering the use of the application to pay partly the trip costs and meet people in the destination.
Traveller 3	Man, 40, Venezuelan. Married with three children. Emigrated to USA five years ago. Office worker. Has family members in Venezuela and visits them frequently, around once-twice a year.	Emigrant travelling to home country on regular basis. Taking advantage of the regular trips with the application.
Buyer 1	Woman, 35, Venezuelan. Married with two children. In a bad economic situation. Needs to get medications parents that cannot be found in Venezuela for her old and struggling to find basic groceries to feed her family. Looking for possibilities to get products and ready to pay to get the products from outside.	Buyer with an actual need for the function of the application to get important products that are not available in the home country.

Buyer 2	Man, 26, Spanish. Smoker. University graduate digital marketer. Has had an exchange period in Mexico. Wishes to get same products, especially cigarettes he really liked, in Spain than in Mexico easily and without paying much. Active social media and technology user.	Leisure/satisfaction buyer; buying reason is personal interest and fulfilling desires.
Buyer 3	Man, 30, Argentine. Spanish/English teacher. Immigrated to Spain, earlier done an exchange in Madrid. Misses some products and cultural aspects from home. Is used to other peer-to-peer services such as Airbnb and BlaBlaCar and is open to use other p2p-services.	Immigrant missing products or needing something from the home country.